

A deer and a dog were kept as pets for three years from their early days. Curiously the distinction between their feeding habits vanished. The carnivorous dog swallows vegetables (cabbages, cauliflower, and peels of fruits), with great pleasure and the herbivorous deer relishes the flesh of a goat. Now they are great friends with each other. One will not eat unless the other is present and vice-versa.

Vegetable feeding among dogs is not so uncommon and may be seen both in the wild state and under domestication. But for the deer, which was caught in the forest when probably 3 weeks old and reared under captivity, its abrupt change to a carnivorous diet is perplexing. How its digestive system could accommodate such a complete change in food, is unexplained. How an unaccustomed protein meal is digested by its normal gastric secretion is unknown.

The author will be thankful to his learned readers for an explanation.

These two curious pets belong to Mrs. K. L. Lahiry; to her the author's best thanks are due.

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35, BALLYGUNJ CIRCULAR ROAD,
5th November, 1946.

5.—NATURAL DEATH OF ELEPHANT.

Your comments contained in the last paragraph of the *B.N.H. Journal* for August 1946, under the above heading, rings a comforting note in my memory.

Whilst lecturing on Jungle Lore in the capacity of Commandant of No. 2 Jungle Training School in Ceylon during the war, I could always rely on one of the 'grand lads' putting forward the usual chestnut! 'Where do elephants go to die? and do they resort to a common burial ground? My reply coincided almost verbatim with your comments; with the following addition. 'Excepting thigh and skull bones, I have known a fully grown dead cow elephant completely disappear within a period of two months.' Although the putrefying flesh and blood killed the grass and vegetation over the area on which the carcase lay, within a short time,—no doubt due to phosphates and other mineral properties,—this grass and vegetation eventually grew to a greater profusion than previously. This, I think, largely accounts, in addition to your factors, for the lack of evidence where the death of large animals is concerned. Burial grounds. This to my mind is mythical!! Where traces of large collections of animal bones have been found; more especially in the case of pre-historic findings, this I attribute to one of the following causes. (1) Disease. (2) Land-slide. (3) Trapped in a glacier.

Although not necessarily portending death, all animals when feeling 'off colour' naturally seek seclusion. How often have we seen this instinct put into practice where our own domestic pets are concerned?

CLOUDLAND ESTATE,
CUMBUM P. O.,
MADURA DIST.
7th January, 1947.

H. GIBBON.
F/Lt.

6.—THE SIZE OF INDIAN ELEPHANTS.

I send you herewith details of some large elephants that have been shot in India within recent years. As long ago as 1886 (vide *The Statesman* of February 23rd 1886) the question of the 11' Asiatic elephant was exercising the minds of sportsmen and others, and the late Mr. G. P. Sanderson had not measured any larger than 10' 6½" high at that time. In recent years I have measured two large tuskers, one belonging to the Raja of Gauripore, Assam, which was 10' 4½" at the shoulder and the other belonging to the Maharajah of Gwalior, which is 10' 5" at the shoulder. I doubt if there is a larger elephant than this in captivity to-day, unless it be found among those owned by the Maharajah of Nepal.

But while the existence of a captive 11' elephant is still to be proved, I have no doubt that such elephants exist in the wild State. Very recently an animal was found dying in the forests of Kachugaon, Goalpara District, Assam, and was measured by a Forest Officer after death and found to be 11' high. His tusks were as follows:—

1. 8' 0" long, 1' 4½" thickest mid-girth. Weight 1 md. (82 lb.)
2. 8' 0" long, 1' 4¾" thickest mid-girth. Weight 1 md. 14 chattaks (84 lb.)

This elephant, I think, constitutes an all-round record for the Asiatic elephant, and I shall be interested to know of any bigger.

The present Maharajah of Mysore claims to have shot an 11' elephant in his State. This animal, a photograph of which appeared in *The Illustrated Weekly* in 1940, had tusks which weighed 162 lb. all told though they were a little over 6' in length.

The present Rajkumar of Gauripur, Assam, shot a makhna (tuskless male) in the Garo Hills of Assam in 1945, the fore-foot of which measured 5' 6" in circumference. It was not possible to measure the shoulder-height of this animal as it lay in an awkward position.

Coming to elephants below 11' in height, the late Mr. P. R. Phukon of Gauhati, Assam, shot a tusker in the Khasi Hills of Assam in 1938 which measured 10' 10", Mr. Gyles Mackrell shot